

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

AQUACULTURE PONDS (Acre) Code 397

DEFINITION

A water impoundment constructed and managed for commercial aquaculture production.

SCOPE

This standard applies to impoundments that store water and are managed for commercial aquaculture purposes. It applies to all types of ponds installed or modified for commercial production of fish and other animals and plants, including those for fee harvesting on the site. It does not apply to ponds used for noncommercial aquaculture products grown for home use or recreational purposes. This standard applies to Class (a) dams having a product of storage times effective height of dam of less than 3,000 acre ft and effective height of dam less than 35 ft.

PURPOSES

To provide a favorable water environment for producing, growing, harvesting, and marketing commercial aquaculture crops to supplement natural food supplies, to control water quality, and for effective use of land, water, and related resources.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On land where soil conditions, climate, water resources, and topography are suitable for constructing a pond or reservoir for commercial aquaculture production that meets the following criteria and conditions:

1. Water quantity will be adequate considering evaporation, seepage, and need for water exchange.

2. Water quality will be suitable for use in aquaculture production or can be made satisfactory by suitable treatment.
3. Application of practical pond management techniques will achieve the desired level of production on a predictable basis.
4. Access to the site is available or can be constructed and maintained.
5. Provision will be made for any needed treatment of water released downstream from the pond.
6. Ponds will store the recommended depth and area of water needed for specific aquaculture products.
7. The location, design, and installation of ponds will comply with flood plain, wetland, and prime farmland regulations.

CRITERIA

The site must be protected from flooding, sedimentation, and contamination. The soils within the pond area, as well as those in the contributing drainage area, must be checked for residues of pesticides and other harmful chemicals if there is a possibility of contamination.

Commercial fishponds may be: (1) embankment ponds that intercept and store surface runoff water, or (2) excavated ponds that are completely enclosed by an embankment around the outer perimeter and are filled by pumping.

Embankment ponds. Earthfill dams and embankments around excavated ponds shall meet

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or exceed the requirements specified for Pond-378 with the following additional requirements:

1. The minimum elevation of the top of the settled embankment shall be increased to allow for wave action.
2. The minimum top width of the embankment shall be 14 ft and 20 ft, respectively, where it is to be used as a one-lane or two-lane road for management purposes and is nonpublic.
3. Interior embankments constructed for division of water or to direct water flow for circulation shall have adequate cross section to provide for stability and function for its intended purpose.

Excavated ponds. Ponds established by excavating and constructing an embankment around their outer perimeter that excludes outside runoff shall have either an emergency spillway with a bottom width of at least 10 ft or have an overflow pipe installed with sufficient capacity to remove a 10-yr/24-hr direct rainfall amount or be at least 8 inch in diameter, whichever is larger.

The pond bottom should be sloped to the outlet at a gradient of at least 0.2 ft per 100 ft.

Orientation. Rectangular ponds shall be positioned as nearly as possible as follows:

10 acres or less long: axis in the direction of prevailing wind. More than 10 acres long: axis perpendicular to the direction of prevailing wind.

Water supply. Wells are the most desirable source of water, but any available source may be used if the quality and quantity are adequate. If water is pumped from rivers and streams or other sources where undesirable fish may be introduced, filters must be installed on the intake.

The minimum incoming water supply for adequate maintenance is considered to be 15 to 25 gal/min/acre. However, evaporation rates, fish-loading densities, and species requirements will be used in establishing specific rates. Flow shall be measured during periods of lowest flow. The pumping and pipeline facilities shall be located to best serve the pond, taking into account accessibility for maintenance and repair;

protection from overflow and flood hazards; connections to power lines or fuel sources; and future expansion. Water entering the pond shall be aerated to increase dissolved oxygen and dissipate harmful gases if needed. This can be accomplished by falling, splashing, spraying, etc. Also, incoming water shall be as far away from outlet drain as possible so that "short circuits" will be avoided.

Pipes and conduits. Pump discharge through levees shall be installed above expected high water, and provisions shall be made to prevent pump and motor vibrations being transmitted to discharge conduits.

Depth. The water depths for various species are as shown in Table 1. These values are applicable to warm climates. Additional depth is required in cold climates to prevent or minimize winterkill.

TABLE 1.

WATER DEPTH FOR VARIOUS SPECIES

Species	Most desirable	Minimum
		(feet)
Channel catfish	4 to 6	2.5
Crawfish	1.5 to 2	1
Minnows, other baitfish	4 to 6	3
Trout	3 to 5	3

Ponds used for cage culture shall have a minimum depth of 5 ft where cages are located. (Minimum clearance below the cage is 1 ft but as much as 3 ft is preferred.) Ponds are supplied by a constant flow of water. If pond is filled only during rainy seasons, a depth of 10 to 12 ft over one-fourth or more of the pond area is recommended.

Drains. The pond must have facilities for complete as well as partial drainage. Turn-down pipes, quick-release valves, bottom-water release sleeves, or other devices for water level control and pond management are to be included in the

construction of the drain facility as appropriate. Pond-378 shall be followed for conduit design and installation of anti-seep collars.

Pond bottom. Where fish are harvested by seining, the pond bottom shall be smoothed and free of all stumps, trees, roots, and other debris. Existing channels and depressions in the pond area shall be filled and smoothed.

For ponds where crawfish are harvested by trapping, complete clearing and removal of trees, stumps, and other vegetation are not necessary unless required by state or local ordinances.

Access and safety. Provisions shall be made for access to the site as well as access for operation and maintenance. Ramps shall be located as necessary to accommodate aeration and harvesting equipment. The maximum grade for equipment access shall be 20 percent (5:1 slope). Generally, level areas or restraining barriers shall be provided to protect pumps, motors, fuel tanks, and utility poles from vehicular traffic. Appropriate safety features and devices shall be installed or made available close by to aid people who fall into the pond and to prevent such accidents.

Protection. A protective cover of vegetation shall be established on all exposed soil surfaces that have been disturbed. If soil or climatic conditions preclude the use of vegetation, other protection methods may be used. Adequate provisions must be made to protect earth surfaces from wave erosion and turbulent water at pipe inlets and outlets.

Fences shall be installed as necessary to exclude livestock and unwanted traffic. Road surfaces shall be treated if necessary to prevent vehicles from cutting deep ruts or sliding into the pond. Dams and levees shall be crowned to provide positive drainage.

CONSIDERATIONS

The owner/operator's objectives will dictate the level of development and management to be planned. The plan must be based on the limitations and potentials of available natural resources. A thorough aquaculture resource

assessment must be made to determine the feasibility of the project. Use NRCS Biology Technical Note 33. The planning is complete when all practice components essential to reaching the cooperators' management objectives have been identified.

Quantity

1. Effects on the water budget, with emphasis on effects on volumes and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, transpiration, deep percolation and ground water recharge.
2. Effects on the volume of downstream flow or aquifers that might cause undesirable environmental, social, or economic effects.

Quality

1. Effects on erosion and the movement of sediment, organics, and soluble and sediment-attached substances.
2. Effects on the visual quality of water resources.
3. Short-term and construction-related effects on the water resources.
4. Effects on the temperature of water discharged.
5. Effects on the movement of dissolved substances below the root zone and toward ground water.
6. Potential for redistributing toxic materials during earth moving.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for constructing commercial fishponds shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

Specifications for establishment and operation of this practice shall be prepared for each field or treatment unit according to the Criteria, Considerations, and O&M described in this standard.

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Specifications shall be recorded using approved certification sheets, job sheets, narrative statements in the conservation plan, or other acceptable methods.

3. Contact must be made with the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality regarding the handling and discharge of effluent.

Additional Documentation Required:

1. Location - Field Numbers and Map.
2. Surface acres and acre-feet of water.
3. Soil map unit information.
4. Date and signature.
5. Date practice applied.

WY-ECS-41 and 42 are applicable to this practice.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

A plan for operation and maintenance shall be prepared for use by those responsible for the system. This plan shall provide for inspection, operation, and maintenance of vegetation, pipes, valves, spillways, roads, and other parts of the system.

The following information summarizes the ways in which fish can be legally raised in Wyoming for commercial purposes:

1. A commercial hatchery license is required when fish are being purchased or raised for resale. A license fee is charged and a surety bond is required. Monthly reports must be submitted covering sales or exchanges of fish. In addition, the licensee may operate one catch-out pond in connection with the hatchery.
2. A fishing preserve license may be obtained on private manmade bodies of water not exceeding 100 acres in size. A license fee is charged. Approval must be obtained from the Wyoming Game & Fish Department prior to each importation of fish to the preserve. Such requirements are designed to protect private and public fishing from infectious fish diseases. The licensee may charge a fee or dues for fishing. A fishing license is not required, but a receipt must accompany all fish leaving the premises.